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THE HOLIDAY CONFERENCE OF 1896

THE twelfth annual conference of the Associated Academic Principals of the State of New York, held at Syracuse December 28-30, is universally admitted to be the most successful in the history of the organization. The membership roll reached nearly 300, and the discussions were definite and to the point.

A new and very pleasant feature was the reception at Crouse College tendered by the Faculty of Syracuse University on Monday evening. The entertainment was highly creditable to the university. In addition to the social feature an excellent lunch was daintily served by the young ladies of the university, and a well rendered musical programme was enjoyed by all as they strolled through the spacious halls and felt that the secondary and higher institutions of learning were not so far apart after all. The estimated attendance was 300. It is hoped that the university reception will be a part of future meetings.

The real work of the conference began Tuesday morning at the high school when President John G. Allen, of Rochester Free Academy, called the principals to order at 9:30 and, after a word of welcome, proceeded to deliver his address, which is here given in full:

“Get a mighty firm grip on the gavel, my man;
Hold the long-winded speakers to time;
Keep a curb on your tongue, 'tis an excellent plan;
Makes a second-rate president prime.”

The report of standing committees was then called for. The committee on legislation showed how, through its work, thousands of dollars had been saved to the schools of the state by securing the enforcement of the “Horton law;” other work of great value had also been done. The executive committee reported the programme as printed. Under miscellaneous business several important resolutions were passed, two of which were the payment of a salary of \$25 to the secretary; the introduction of papers for opening and closing discussions. At the close of the miscellaneous business the president announced the first topic for discussion:

What books are most stimulating for literature work, and how should

they be studied?—The discussion was opened by Dr. Richard Jones of the Regents' office, followed by Principals Wickes, Sheldon, Lovell, Miller, Hayden. The discussion showed careful thought, and resulted in some definite suggestions which cannot help but be of great value to the schools. Dr. Sheldon was at his best in this discussion, and urged the cultivation of the imagination, as did Principal Wickes.

The high school teacher's equipment was the second question discussed. Dr. Albert Leonard opened the discussion with an excellent paper, and was followed by Principals Ottaway, Robinson, Baker, Sheldon, Lyttle. Dr. Robinson scored a point that was appreciated when he said that the colleges were requiring a standard in English that they had never been able to maintain themselves. Dr. Sheldon said that in estimating any teacher he would give five points to the man, three to the teacher, and two to the scholar. It was a great mistake to think that any educated person was a teacher any more than he was a doctor or a lawyer. The rest of the forenoon was given up to the consideration of the

Duties of principals under the compulsory education law.—Principal Hood opened the discussion with an excellent paper upon the humanitarian treatment of the boys and girls, many of whom were to be pitied rather than blamed. Principals Farr, Miller, Sheldon, Baker, Boynton, Kinney, and Superintendent Blodget, and Mr. Wright of the Department of Public Instruction, took part in the discussion. There seemed to be some misunderstanding of the different speakers who were agreed as to the seriousness of the offense of truancy, but differed as to methods for its curtailment.

President Allen then appointed Principals Norris, Lovell, and E. E. Smith as nominating committee.

The afternoon session was given up to the discussion of two questions and to group meetings, the latter a new and desirable departure from former meetings. Principals Cheney, Lovell, King, Clark, Verrill, Filer, Graves, Wickes, Bassett, discussed the question of the decline of reading and spelling in our schools, at the close of which Principal Baker offered a resolution to the effect that our boys and girls read and spell better now at ten years of age than they did twenty-five years ago at fourteen. It was referred to the committee on resolutions, but not until it had occasioned much amusement. The second question,

How to deal with delinquent, negligent, and careless pupils, was

opened by Principal Armstrong, and was followed by Principal Whitbeck and others. At the close of this discussion the conference divided up into three groups for the discussion of the following questions: (a) Teachers' Training Classes, (b) The Shortening and Enriching of the Grammar School Course, (c) The Best Way of Teaching Composition writing. Mr. A. S. Downing, of the State Department, presided over the first; Dr. Wm. J. Milne, of the Albany Normal College, over the second.

Tuesday evening President Jacob Gould Schurman, of Cornell University, addressed a joint meeting of the academic and grammar school principals in city hall upon the subject, "College entrance requirements and the high school curriculum." No abstract can give any idea of this address. It was pedagogical, logical, practical. Suffice it to say President Schurman was at his best.

The first question considered Wednesday morning was:

Is teaching a desirable profession? If not, why not?—Mr. A. C. Hill, of the State Department, took the negative "for the sake of the discussion," and was followed by Principals Lovell, Tuthill, Griffith, Gamage. Some of the strongest papers of the conference were presented in this discussion. The rest of the session was given up to the discussion of the second topic:

Should this conference endorse the recent action of Cornell University relative to conferring degrees?—In view of the very decided action taken by the conference in 1893 against the conferring of the A.B. degree without Greek (see p. 99, SCHOOL REVIEW, Vol. 3), this discussion was looked forward to with great interest. President Allen's announcement that President Schurman was present and would address the conference added greatly to this interest. It was also announced that President Stryker, of Hamilton College, would speak upon this question, and interest changed to enthusiasm. Dr. Schurman was the first to speak, and in his ten minutes the action of Cornell was clearly explained and many misrepresentations and misunderstandings cleared away. Principal C. R. T. Smith followed with an excellently well sustained argument endorsing Cornell's action. He was followed by President Stryker who defended the "historic" A.B. degree, and eloquently pleaded the cause of liberal before special education. Principal Miller, Professor Smalley, of Syracuse, and Principal Farr could not endorse Cornell. Drs. Brigham, Colgate, and Lee, St. Lawrence, were in favor of Cornell's action. President Stryker

was again given the floor, and was followed by President Schurman. Those present will always remember this debate. All who took part in it were very much in earnest and presented their views with great clearness, but President Schurman and President Stryker were the two central figures, and their debate will go into history upon this question. No outline can be given; those who failed to hear it have lost something for which there is no substitute. Scholarship, refinement, courtesy to one's opponent, eloquence, earnestness, oratory, all blended and accumulated as the debate proceeded till the enthusiasm of the conference found expression in repeated and prolonged applause of both speakers. At the close of the debate the resolution was promptly tabled.

Chairman Gamage, of the committee on resolutions, then presented the report of that committee, which included the resolution above referred to. Among other resolutions one was voted that the Conference was opposed to any change looking toward the interference, in any way, with the regular and separate session of the Academic Principals at the holiday time.

Chairman Norris, of the committee on nominations, reported the following officers for the ensuing year, which report was adopted:

President, Principal O. D. Robinson, Albany.

Vice-President, Principal B. L. Clapp, Fulton.

Secretary and Treasurer, Principal S. Dwight Arms, Palmyra.

Executive Committee:

Principal T. H. Armstrong, Friendship.

Principal A. H. Johnson, Southampton.

Principal J. M. McKee, Silver Creek.

Principals' Council:

Principal D. C. Farr, Glens Falls.

Principal T. O. Baker, Yonkers.

Rev. Father Kiernan, Rochester.

Principal Mary E. Catton, Perry.

Adjourned.

F. D. BOYNTON